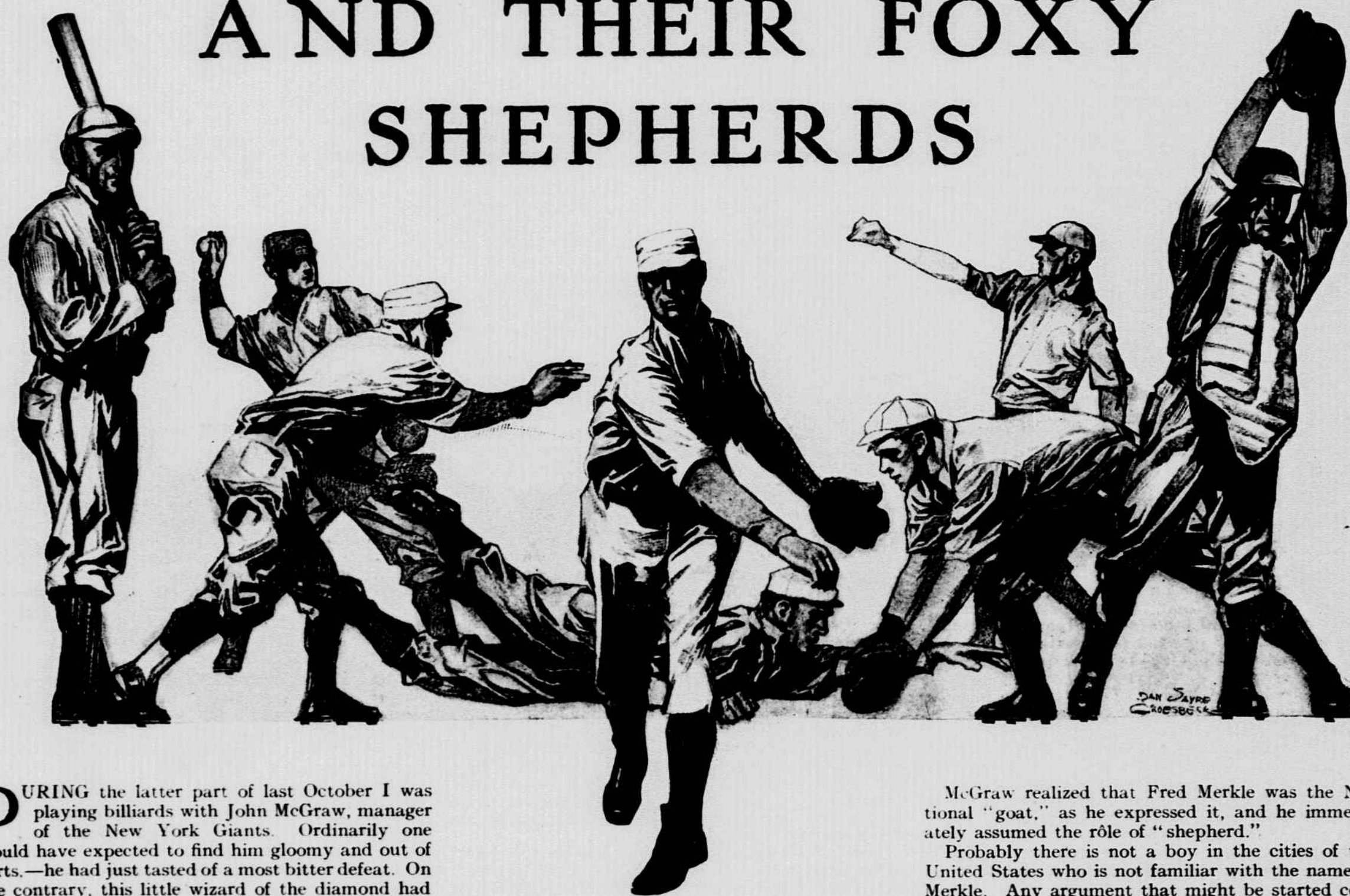


BASEBALL GOATS AND THEIR FOXY SHEPHERDS



DURING the latter part of last October I was playing billiards with John McGraw, manager of the New York Giants. Ordinarily one would have expected to find him gloomy and out of sorts.—he had just tasted of a most bitter defeat. On the contrary, this little wizard of the diamond had the entire room in an uproar by his merry jibes at his success or failure on certain billiard shots.

The most sensational race in the history of baseball had just been concluded, and Chicago had won the championship of the National League. Either through better luck, better hitting, or better generalship, Manager Frank Chance of Chicago had captured the one deciding game which happened to be the play-off of a tie contest that had thrown the country into a furor of excitement two weeks before.

McGraw had just remarked that his only regret at the loss of the pennant was the fact that his players had been deprived of the two thousand dollars' prize money each was to receive for playing in the series for the championship of the world. They had worked so hard and faithfully, that to him it seemed a tragedy for them to lose out at the last minute and through a trivial error of judgment. He was not thinking of himself.

At that moment a tall, muscular young man of pale face and weary expression walked in and extended his hand to the picturesque little manager of the Giants.

"I am going home, Mac," said the young man, "and I came to tell you goodbye."

"Well, goodbye, old fellow," and McGraw gave young Fred Merkle a hearty handshake. "I wish you the best of success and hope you will have a good time this winter."

Merkle then turned to me and gave me his hand. All this time not a vestige of a smile had ruffled his face. He appeared to be weary and sick at heart. His usually rosy cheeks had bleached to ashen white. Crow's feet were under his eyes. McGraw picked up his cue and started to make a shot. Merkle looked steadily at the manager for an instant and hesitated as if about to say something. His lips moved for a moment; but he evidently changed his mind, for he rammed his hands into his pockets and walked away. It was in this frame of mind that he left New York.

Merkle's Great Future

THAT fellow is a great ball player," observed McGraw, much to my surprise. "Some of these days he will be one of the stars of the league. Mark my predictions!"

"And so you do not blame him for having lost the pennant?" I asked.

"Blame him!" and the little manager's eyes flashed. "Anybody is likely to make a mistake. We

By **Bozeman Bulger**

Drawing by Dan Sayre Groesbeck

all do. If the mistake happens to come at a time when it loses an important game, it is just a hard break of luck. The player is simply unfortunate, that's all. If Merkle's mistake had occurred in a game earlier in the season, nobody would have remembered it two weeks afterward."

It was suggested to the manager that many of the fans had expressed a desire that Merkle be sold to some other team. Then McGraw showed a flash of the peculiar power within him that has made him such a conspicuous success as a handler and developer of men.

"Fred Merkle will be a member of the Giants next season!" he declared most positively. "Why should I let him go just because he made a mistake? As a matter of fact, you know that Merkle saved that game by making a hit when I sent him in as a substitute batter. That's the part of his work I am looking at. Anybody can touch second, my boy; but there are mighty few ball players who can go in and make a hit when it counts!"

That one expression explains why McGraw sent Merkle a contract for the coming season and voluntarily increased his salary. It also gives an insight into the analytical mind of McGraw and explains his wonderful career as a director of men. The aggressive or affirmative side of everything appeals to him. He has no time for things that are negative.

"Don't waste your time trying to keep the other fellows from winning," I have often heard him say; "but go out and win yourself." He never plays on the defensive. Close finishes have no attraction to McGraw. He wants either to win or to lose by a big margin.

For the manager of a defeated team to have spoken of Merkle as he did that day in the billiard room was a revelation to me. Here was a man whose greatest ambition had been crushed by the negligent act of a single player. But it did not ruffle his temper. He brushed it away as though it was a speck of dust on his coat sleeve. His one idea was to save the player. The prejudice of the public against the unfortunate infielder had not influenced the manager in the slightest degree.

McGraw realized that Fred Merkle was the National "goat," as he expressed it, and he immediately assumed the rôle of "shepherd."

Probably there is not a boy in the cities of the United States who is not familiar with the name of Merkle. Any argument that might be started concerning the baseball campaign of last season inevitably ends by placing the blame for the defeat of the Giants on the shoulders of Merkle. He thereby becomes the "goat."

Explaining About "Goats"

I FEEL a presentiment that the editor of this magazine is going to bring me to task for using that word "goat"; hence, this advance defense. You good English scholars may profess not to know what that word means; but it is perfectly safe to venture that you can find out by asking the office boy. When things go wrong in your office, and nobody else can be found on whom to place the blame, the boy will probably tell you that he often has to be the "goat" himself.

Zoology tells us that the "goat" is an animal; but to sporting writers it does not necessarily follow that it is a quadruped. That science may be used occasionally to browbeat nature fakers; but a little thing like zoology cannot hope to stand in the way of the great American game of baseball. The diamond has a language of its own, and uses it as the fans see fit. As a matter of fact, baseball fans are about the only class of people who really use the English language for one of the purposes it was intended: a convenience. If it doesn't quite answer, it is the simplest thing in the world to add a little word here and there and help it along. In that way both the language and the fans are benefited. In baseball the expression of meaning is made in the shortest and most pointed way possible.

Really, there are only two ways of explaining what is meant by "goat" as applied to human beings. One is to use the synonym, "fall guy"—and the other isn't worth trying. Most everybody knows about the simple differences in the meaning of the word, anyway.

Many persons have assumed the rôle of "goat"; but Fred Merkle appears to have been the first to have it forced upon him as a national title.

Five Vital Steps Omitted

BY the omission of five ordinary strides, this athlete caused the New York club to lose the greatest baseball honor in the world, interfered with the work of the national political campaign committees,—among baseball devotees there was no time for Bryan or Taft while the National commission had this case under consideration,—and sent thousands of dollars